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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/15): PALESTINIAN GRATITUDE TO EGYPT

Main Stories:

Photos of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation signing ceremony on April 14 in Ramallah are the lead photos on all front pages. Positive coverage of the \$500 million housing mortgage loan program follows with excerpts of remarks by Palestinian President Abbas noting that, "the modern state is built of several basic components of which security and the economy are the most important." Abbas added more political commentary, insisting that, "there are no issues to be delayed in negotiations, and we are making every effort to achieve a truce [with Israel] and end the [Gaza] siege."

Official daily, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida runs a large photo of a confident Palestinian President Abbas chairing a meeting with relaxed Palestinian Authority ministers and a smiling Prime Minister Fayyad on an inside page. All dailies cover the story of Abbas attendance at the meeting. Al Quds front page reports that Abbas asserted in statements to the press that the Fayyad Government, "enjoys the full support and backing" of the Presidency. Other front-page articles carry remarks from an April 14 Ramallah press conference by Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information Riad Malki, in which he confirms that Abbas conveyed to Fayyad his full confidence in the Government. Malki added that Abbas urged ministers not to heed criticism by a few voices, mostly motivated by personal agendas. Malki concluded that Abbas recalled similar difficulties and pressures that he had to deal with when he was prime minister. Finally, Al Quds front page alludes internal Fatah power struggles in a quote by Fatah member Qadora Faris asserting that, "the Fatah crisis is an internal one and has nothing to do with Fayyad's government."

Positive coverage on the agreement between the Palestinian Government and the public employees union continues. The reporting notes that the government will pay a 50% increase in salaries as well as back-pay in exchange for an end to the threat of strikes. Teachers who conducted a recent strike will not be docked pay, the coverage concluded.

The visit of former president Carter continues to capture front-page headlines. The dailies run a Reuters report, highlighting comments by Carter that discussions with Syria and Hamas should be part of any future peace agreement.

The dailies report that Afif Safia, previous head of the PLO mission in Washington, has been reassigned as Palestinian Authority ambassador to Russia.

The meeting between Israeli Foreign Minister Livni and other Arab leaders and officials in Qatar is still front page news. The papers report that Livni met with the Omani foreign minister for the first time and commented on April 14 that, "the Gaza Strip is an obstacle to the establishment of a Palestinian State." In other Gaza news, the dailies report that Israel has decided to resume delivery of fuel to Gaza and that UNRWA has begun cash assistance to Gaza families.

The front page of Al-Quds cites a Reuters story about an opinion poll showing that the Arab world has a "black" view of the United States. According to the poll conducted by Maryland University, 80% of interviewees had a negative image of the US. Interviewees included 4,000 residents of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates. The poll also showed that

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most of Arabs interviewed do not consider Iran to be the greatest enemy of the US, and showed greater approval for Hamas than Fatah. Most interviewed viewed Fatah as "backed by the US."

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶1. Al-Quds independent carries an op-ed entitled, "Egypt's security, its control and authority over its territory is a red line [non-negotiable] for Palestinians" by Palestinian National Council Member Hatem Abu Shaban (4/15): Lately, we have been hearing strange noises from Palestinian groups calling for a breach and invasion of the international border between Egypt and Palestine, claiming that this is the way to end the siege imposed on Gaza.... Egypt was and still is a warm [hospitable] place for Palestinians in general, specifically for Gazans. Egypt has protected Gaza for a long time and defended it and its national rights in many battles and military confrontations and has fought for Palestinian rights in the international arena. Palestinians... will never be able to repay even the smallest part of what Egypt has done for them... Everyone should recognize that Egypt's territorial sovereignty and its security is a red line [non-negotiable] for Palestinians and we will not allow anyone to overstep this line for any reason."

¶2. Independent Al-Ayyam carries an op-ed entitled, "The independence that causes a catastrophe!" (4/15): "Two totally contradictory things: catastrophe and independence; one a day for sadness and the other for happiness; poverty and riches; a strong economy and a very fragile one; huge military arsenals and nuclear bombs... Palestine is disappearing while Israel is rising. Israel is superior in many things, but the Palestinians are supreme in one thing: asking for their legitimate rights in the face of an Israeli colonial power... is it possible to adjust the balance between the two contradictions to escape the elimination of a ...powerless people by a powerful state? This question has been asked for the past 60 years and Israel's answer is always: no."

Walles